

‘Linking Lincolnshire Sport: The role of University women’s cricket in promoting women’s participation.’

Patriarchal influences have been shown to create barriers to equity and inclusion in sports participation and governance (Rowe, D. (2004). *Critical Reading: Sport, Culture and Media*. Berkshire. McGraw Hill). Cricket is a sport in which patriarchal values still largely prevail. Despite the recent success of the women’s international cricket team, the Active People Survey (Sport England, 2012) shows that national participation rates have decreased in women’s cricket on a monthly basis (between period 2007/2008 and period 2010/2011). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that where tailored opportunities are created, there is a latent demand for cricket among women (Hibberd et al 2011; ‘*Not Just a Boys Game*’: *Programme evaluation of a multi-agency cricket intervention designed to reduce gender inequity in a city in the East of England*.’ Paper presented at the student BASES 2011 conference). However, access still remains limited in the Higher Education institution studied.

The present study will build upon previous work completed in 2011 that widened participation in women’s cricket in the community. The principal aim of this study is to assess whether women’s perceptions of barriers to participation in cricket can be addressed by the creation of additional opportunities at a University in the East of England. The project will entail a needs assessment to inform future actions. Additional opportunities in women’s cricket will be delivered. The efficacy and sustainability of services provided will be assessed, particularly in relation to partnership work in the local context. Partners include the County Cricket Board, Students Union, and University Cricket Society, and a locally established cricket club. Project actions will involve sourcing facilities, equipment, and female coaches, producing promotion materials, and facilitating relationships with relevant partners.

The study will use a theory-driven model of evaluation using the framework set out by Rossi et al (2004, *Evaluation: A systematic approach*. Sage, London.). Data will be obtained from a cross sectional sample of female University students. Methods will employ a mixture of qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) measures to assess perceived barriers to participation, latent demand for women’s cricket, and the efficacy of project delivery. The project will therefore contribute to the LOCOG (2008) strategy of offering women the ‘chance to participate in the sport of choice without fear of abuse or ridicule’ (LOCOG Diversity and inclusion strategy 2008 p. 5).